



RETAIL FOODS REGULATORY CLARIFICATIONS

Retail Foods Division
Texas Department of Health

October 10, 2000
RFRC - No. 1

SUBJECT: HOT WATER AT VEGETABLE/PREP SINKS

Applicable Texas Food Establishment Rules (TFER) Sections:

Section 229.164(f) Preventing food and ingredient contamination.

Section 229.164(h) Preventing contamination from equipment, utensils, wiping cloths, and linens.

Question:

Does TFER specify whether a vegetable/prep sink needs to have hot and cold water?

Response:

There is no requirement in TFER that states that the sink in which vegetables are prepared must be equipped to provide hot water. Hot water must be available to properly clean and sanitize the sink as a type of food contact equipment.

Support:

Section 229.164(f)(6)(A) states that "Raw fruits and vegetables shall be thoroughly washed in water to remove soil and other contaminants before being cut, combined with other ingredients, cooked, served, or offered for human consumption in ready to eat form...." The provision does not state any temperature requirements of the water. The water is being used to remove soil or other particulate substances, so either cold or hot water would meet the objective.

Information that was released on the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Program Information Manual bulletin on June 8, 2000 discussed the safe food handling practices for melons in retail establishments. The guidance document specified that "Before cutting, wash the outer surface of the melon thoroughly with cool tap water to remove surface dirt." The remainder of the document addressed the handling and storage of the cut melon. This was the only reference that was located that specifically mentioned the temperature of the water used to wash vegetables. It can be concluded that the washing of fruits and

vegetables can be done with cold water.

The other issue that is raised is whether or not the vegetable preparation sink must be equipped to provide hot water because the sink is a piece of food-contact equipment.

Section 229.164(h)(1)(B) states that food may not contact "...surfaces of utensils and equipment that are not cleaned and specified under Section 229.165(m)-(o) of this title and sanitized as specified in Section 229.165(p)-(r) of this title.

The sink can be considered as equipment that can be cleaned using washing procedures for alternative manual warewashing equipment, as stated in Section 229.165(o)(5), because the sink can be considered a piece of large, fixed equipment. Procedures to clean and sanitize the sink are addressed in Sections 229.165(n)(4)(A) and Section 229.165(r)(3)(B). The food establishment's Person in Charge (PIC) must be able to demonstrate that the sink is being cleaned and sanitized according to the aforementioned provisions.

Although the TFER does not require that the prep sink must be equipped with hot water for proper cleaning and sanitizing, this would be the preferred condition. Having hot water at the sink would make the cleaning much easier and more efficient. It would increase the likelihood that the sink would be cleaned according to the regulatory requirements.

The conclusion is that a sink that is used to prepare vegetables does not have to be equipped to provide hot water. Cold water can be used to wash the fruits and vegetables. The sink does not need to have hot water to be cleaned and sanitized. The washing and sanitizing solutions can be prepared at the three-compartment sink to meet the required cleaning and sanitizing provisions of the regulations.

Local agencies should also research local plumbing codes for additional requirements.

Response To:

E-mail from Ree Slovin of the City of Huntsville Health Department on September 5, 2000

Agree to form and substance:



Steven C. McAndrew, Director
Retail Foods Division

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